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# Inside Report . . . By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

## The Yarmolinsky Sacrifice (II)

THIS is the full story of how Adam Yarmolinsky was blackballed from President Johnson's poverty program in a secret kangaroo-court meeting of House Democratic leaders last Thursday.

Yarmolinsky is the dynamic, pint-size special assistant to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara who left the Pentagon several months ago to help Sargent Shriver draw up Mr. Johnson's poverty program. He was slated to be deputy director of the new anti-poverty program. He had permanently left the Pentagon (although the Pentagon still was paying his salary).

The Thursday meeting of House Democratic leaders in Speaker John McCormack's office was convened at the insistence of several Southern Congressmen who were after Yarmolinsky's scalp. As a matter of routine, a dozen or so regional "whips," few of whom had ever heard Yarmolinsky's name, were present.

But also present were Rep. Harold Cooley of North Carolina (who made the most vicious attacks on Yarmolinsky at the meeting) and Rep. Mendel Rivers, soon to be chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

Speaking for the Administration at the meeting (described by one Congressman as "the dirtiest hour in my career in the House") was Shriver.

The ostensible point of the meeting was for each regional whip to report on the number of pro-poverty votes by Congressmen in his area. It quickly became apparent that the real purpose was to threaten Southern defections on the poverty vote the next day unless Shriver took a blood oath to exclude Yarmolinsky from the program.



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Shriver refused to say whether Yarmolinsky would or would not be part of the top-echelon poverty team once the bill becomes law. He insisted that Yarmolinsky's role was up to President Johnson. He kept repeating that even his own part in the program was uncertain, that

only the President could name the top administrators.

At this Cooley stage-whispered that Shriver was a dirty liar.

Cooley then spoke louder. Shriver, he said, told three members of the North Carolina delegation at a breakfast meeting that Yarmolinsky would definitely be one of the five presidential appointees.

"Whom do you believe," Cooley asked with heavy sarcasm, "your colleagues in Congress or Shriver?"

WHY THE drive against Yarmolinsky?

Yarmolinsky's foes, who pronounced his name several different ways, talked much about his part in preparing the Gesell report (a year-old document calling for the end of racial discrimination in towns adjoining military bases).

Unmentioned at the meeting but the biggest source of irritation to Rivers and other Armed Services committee members was the way Yarmolinsky stepped on some military toes as one of McNamara's whiz kids.

Neither of these complaints have any visible link to the poverty program. Nor does a photostatic document from a right-wing group alleging that

Yarmolinsky's parents favored the loyalist side in the Spanish civil war—a document that has been circulating among House Members. Its implication that the elder Yarmolinskys are somehow suspect is not only unproved but has no relation to the competence of their son.

Somehow overlooked was the fact that Yarmolinsky has had access to all Pentagon secrets for more than three years, without a murmur of protest from Cooley, Rivers, et al.

The kangaroo court in McCormack's office mercifully broke up on a House quorum call. Whereupon McCormack informed the White House that, if Yarmolinsky were not publicly ruled out of the poverty program, the bill might be lost. President Johnson agreed.

SAID ONE Congressman who suffered through the meeting: "It degraded each one of us—the Speaker because he stayed silent, the President because he gave in so quickly, the country because a decent American was hung, drawn, and quartered without a word in his own defense."

Forced by high-level political pressure to vote for the poverty program against their better judgment, Southern Congressmen sought a way to protect their flank. They zeroed in on Yarmolinsky whose Russian name and liberal politics were an ideal target. They demanded a pound of flesh, and the Johnson Administration gave it to them.

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